



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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BOOST IN MASS TRANSIT INCENTIVES, FREE BUSES WOULD HELP EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Councilmember Silverman's \$1 million more to get Montgomery moving...

Councilmember Steve Silverman proposed today to spend an additional \$1 million on Montgomery County programs designed to boost mass transit use and help alleviate traffic congestion in the most densely-populated parts of the County.

The proposal, which comes as the County Council works on next year's operating budget, follows up on the results of a Council-initiated survey last fall of 1,000 local commuters who drive to work alone. Half said they were willing to consider alternative transportation. Eleven percent said they would ride buses if fares were lowered to 50 cents or less. Sixteen percent said they would use alternative transportation if they received \$65 per month transportation subsidies.

"Everybody talks about the big controversial transportation projects," said Councilmember Silverman. "Some people favor them and some oppose them. But either way, even if there's agreement, construction is years away."

"We need to provide additional traffic congestion relief for our residents now. We need to take steps particularly in areas where new roads are not possible, such as Bethesda, Friendship Heights, and Route 29.

"That's why I'm proposing \$1 million in new funds for traffic congestion relief in the Fiscal Year 02 operating budget. Three areas offer the potential for getting more people out of their cars for a relatively modest sum:

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1. "Beef-up the "Fare Share" program in targeted high-traffic congestion areas. This program provides public and employer funds to private sector commuters who get to work without driving alone. Approximately 3,000 employees from 74 different companies have participated in Fare Share. With additional monies, we can reach more companies and employees.
2. "Explore the possibility of free bus service in high-traffic congestion corridors.
3. "Provide additional incentives to get county government employees to stop driving to work alone by expanding the "GET IN" program to \$65 per employee per month, similar to recent federal government action regarding Metrochek."

Joining Councilmember Silverman at the news conference were community leaders, including County Chamber of Commerce president John Dillon, Audubon Naturalist Society leader Neal Fitzpatrick, Harry Sanders from Action Committee for Transit, John Kane of the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and David Abraham and Carolyn Bennett of the QRC Division of Macro International in Bethesda, which participates in the Fare Share program.

"Our County's businesses need relief from the effects of traffic congestion," said Dillon. "More money for programs such as GET IN and Fare Share, as well as selected free bus service, can pay rich dividends in helping to ease traffic congestion and parking woes."

"Councilmember Steve Silverman's proposal to add one million new dollars to help relieve traffic congestion is a step in the right direction," said Fitzpatrick, conservation director for the Audubon Naturalist Society. "Economic incentives can really help get people out of their cars and onto public transportation. Extending the successful Metrochek program to county government employees is a great idea."

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